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Juvenile Commitment Rate: The Effects of
Gender, Race, Parents, and School

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Criminal Justice and Criminology

by

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ABSTRACT

Commitment Rate of Juveniles: The Effects of Gender, Race, Parents, and School Attendance

by

Mitchell A. Thompson

The purpose of this study was to analyze those factors that affect the commitment rate of juveniles and how outside variables such as gender, race, parents, and school attendance affect the commitment rate of crime and delinquency. The variables used for this study came from the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) data collected by Esbensen and Osgood (1999). The analysis revealed that females are more likely to have a higher commit rate than males, that Whites have a higher commit rate than other races, that those juveniles living with their father have a lower commit rate than those living with others, and those juveniles who do not attend school often are less likely to commit crimes and delinquent actions than those who attend more often.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	2
LIST OF TABLES.....	5
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
Purpose of the Criminal Justice Study.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	8
Limitation.....	9
Hypothesis.....	9
2. REVIEW OF THE PRIOR RESEARCH.....	11
Gender.....	11
Traditional/Non-traditional.....	15
School Attendance.....	20
Race/Ethnicity.....	24
3. METHODOLOGY.....	28
Data.....	28
Variables.....	29
Dependent Variable.....	29
Independent Variables.....	30
Analytic Strategy.....	31
4. RESULTS.....	33

Summary Statistics.....	33
Crosstabulations.....	35
PHI and Cramer’s V.....	39
Logistic Regression.....	40
5. DISCUSSION.....	42
Hypothesis 1.....	42
Hypothesis 2.....	43
Hypothesis 3.....	43
Hypothesis 4.....	44
Limitations.....	45
Implications.....	45
REFERENCES.....	47
VITA.....	51

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Descriptive Statistics for All Variables.....	34
2. Crosstabulation of Gender by Commit Rate.....	36
3. Crosstabulation of Race by Commit Rate.....	37
4. Crosstabulation of Live With by Commit Rate.....	38
5. Crosstabulation of School Attendance by Commit Rate.....	39
6. Phi and Cramer's V.....	40
7. Summary of General Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Juvenile Commit Rate.....	41

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recently, society has developed interest in the commitment rate of juveniles. Within the last 10 years there has been an abundant amount of research done on the variables that cause juveniles to commit crime. Juvenile crime has been on the rise in the United States within the last few years (Esbensen & Osgood, 1999, p. 2). Perkins (2001, p. 612) noted, “juvenile delinquency, defined as antisocial or criminal behavior by children and adolescents, is a widespread societal problem that is threatening the well-being of families and communities throughout the country”.

Many different factors have been researched to understand the reasons behind the high commitment rate for juveniles in America. These factors include the race/ethnicity of juveniles, gender, living conditions, and, attendance at school. The effects of these variables have been documented in past and present research. These studies focused on these different variables in an attempt to clarify and simplify the research on the commitment rate of juveniles.

Race/ethnicity is a variable that is often included in the research on juvenile commitment rates and what factors make arrest rates high for minorities. Previous studies have shown mixed results and, therefore, it is inconclusive to how race/ethnicity affects the commit rate of juveniles. A study by Guevara, Spohn, and Herz (2004) revealed that African American males are convicted at a rate of 7 to 9 times higher than that of White males. Many researchers have felt the opposite and believe that White males have a higher commitment rate than African American Males.

One factor that is included in most of all past research conducted to analyze commitment rate of juveniles is gender. Interestingly, the research in this area has produced uneven results. Because this is the case, it is unclear how gender affects the commitment rates of juveniles in America. Moreover, most studies show that males are more likely to be arrested than females. An example of research done in this field was a study that found that males have a 1 in 50 chance of being arrested by age 18 where females have a 1 in 400 chance of being arrested (DeComo, 1998).

Recently, researchers have become more interested in the conditions in which juveniles live. One such study revealed that this variable is one of the biggest factors affecting juveniles and whether or not they have a high delinquent commit rate. The study also showed that those juveniles living with one parent have a higher commitment rate than those living with both parents. It has been revealed that children living with step parents often have a higher commitment rate than those living with both biological parents. Those juveniles living in the traditional family are less likely to be involved in crime and, therefore, are less likely to be guilty (Mathherne & Thomas, 2001).

Another variable that is often reviewed in studies involving juveniles is school attendance. School attendance often helps children focus and most importantly keeps them busy. Extracurricular activities after school often promote children to stay away from delinquency. Furthermore, those children who stay in school and attend on a regular basis have a lower commitment rate than those who are absent or drop out of school. Moreover, there has been little research into efforts to find effective methods to reduce the truancy problem in this country. McCluskey, Bynum, and Patchin (2004, p.217) noted, "As part of a constellation of school problems, poor school attendance has been

linked with diminished academic performance, school dropout, substance use, and violence; and is considered a risk factor for serious juvenile delinquency”.

Purpose of the Criminal Justice Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the variables that may affect the commit rate of juveniles. Moreover, this study is being conducted to determine which of the four independent variables affect the commit rate of juveniles the most. External influences including race, sex, school attendance, and living conditions were examined in order to discover what relationship these variables have on the delinquency commit rate of juveniles. The variables and data used for this study came from the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) study gathered by Esbensen and Osgood (1999). The data needed for this study were collected from a sample of 5,935 eighth graders in 11 different United States cities in 1999.

Significance of the Study

Due to time and resources, it was decided that secondary data were more proficient. Furthermore, the secondary data allowed me to use variables from the study and make predictions about the population. The survey was significant in its effort to reduce the commitment rate of juveniles. It was intended to research American juveniles and then attempt to find what external variables influenced their decision to commit crime. Juvenile crime is steadily on the rise and, therefore, it is extremely important to find the reason for this and reverse it. Also, a considerably amount of money is spent of the Gang Resistance Education Program; therefore, the present research was done to see if the program was effective in reducing the commitment rate of juveniles. The research

was also important when comparing its results to past research. Moreover, the difference between the two could contribute to answers about juveniles committing crimes.

Limitation

There are a number of limitations that affected this study on the commitment rate of juveniles. First, only 11 different United States cities or counties were used to sample from. Moreover, this created external validity in the fact that one sample's opinion may have been different from another sample's. Secondly, I took results from previous research, meaning that I had to use what Esbensen and Osgood had within their research findings. As with all research, there is individual and social bias within the study in the fact that Osgood and Esbensen personally selected the cities to survey. Moreover, only a select number of cities have the Gang Resistance Education Training program. This research had a number of things that could have threaten its internal validity. The survey questions could have persuaded the eight graders to have answered a certain way.

Hypothesis

The research hypotheses for the present study were as follows:

H1: Male juveniles are more likely to have a higher commitment rate than female juveniles.

H2: African Americans juveniles will have a higher commitment rate than Whites, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans.

H3: Juveniles who come from a traditional two-parent household will be less likely to have a higher commitment rate than juveniles who do not come from a two-parent household.

H4: Juveniles with a low absentee rate from school will have a lower commit rate than those juveniles with a high absentee rate.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE PRIOR RESEARCH

The studies dealing with juvenile commitment rates are extensive. During the eighties researchers began undertaking studies to explore the causes of juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, society has taken an interest in reducing juvenile delinquency and, therefore, has promoted research. This chapter details a review of the research pertaining to the commitment rate of juveniles. Moreover, this chapter is broken down into four different sections of text. The first area deals with the effects of gender difference and how gender affects the commitment rates. The second section of literature focuses on the effects that traditional families (two-parent) have on their children verses non-traditional. The third area of research deals with how school attendance affects juvenile delinquency. The final section deals with race/ethnicity and its affect on the commitment rate of juveniles.

Gender

Until recently, “girls and young women have been largely overlooked in the development of juvenile policy and programs and few resources have been directed at them” (Bloom, Owen, Deschenes, and Rosenbaum, 2002, p.37). Recently our country has seen an increase in female juveniles committing delinquent acts. According to Bloom et al. the family is the most important risk and protective factor for young women. Presently, many families are being separated which seems to affect females more. This report suggests that the needs of delinquent girls within the justice system are tied to specific, exclusive risk and protective factors that model gender-appropriate interventions. Also, this report suggests the need for more studies to determine what is

needed to diminish delinquency by girls. Bloom et al. explained that the office of Juvenile Justice has provided grant money towards new policies and programs for convicted juvenile females. The authors report that there is an increase in female offenders who are committing more serious crimes and there is no answer to what works for those juveniles.

Casper, Belanoff, and Offer (1996) examined the psychiatric symptoms in adolescents. Moreover, “several studies have noted qualitative differences in the way adolescent boys and girls describe their feelings and how they act upon them” (Casper et al., p.500). Their report determined that female adolescents regardless of race reported higher levels of emotional stress. Furthermore, females have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and mood swings than male juveniles. The survey found that 12% of female students as opposed to 4% of male students suffered from anxiety. According to Casper et al. mood swings could be attributed to biological and psychological factors. Around the same number of girls as boys taking the survey admitted to drug use. Also, there was no gender difference in juveniles drinking alcohol. This study did suggest that males have a higher amount of aggression than did female juveniles. It was suggested that males are involved in more violent behavior than females which leads to a higher commitment rate. The study showed that African Americans and White juveniles were similar in psychological adjustments. However, the study did show a sex difference in the level of psychiatric symptoms between 16 to 18 years old. This finding suggests that psychiatric symptoms often lead juveniles toward delinquency and then being convicted. The researchers, Casper et al., wrote it is very important to control for education when studying juveniles from separate racial or ethnical backgrounds.

Santtila, Hakkanen, Alison, and Whyte (2003) examined juvenile firesetters and explored whether any associations between the crime scene action themes and offender characteristics would be evident. The study found only two distinct characteristics of the offender, depression and delinquency. According to Santtila et al. the expressive form of firesetting was associated with offenders' psychopathology and female gender. The theme of the crime scene appears to be associated with the age of the offender. It appears, that "the background characteristics of juvenile firesetters indicate that juvenile firesetting is often associated with antisocial behavior and psychopathology, deserving, therefore, disparate prevention, intervention, and investigation programmes" (Santtila et al., p. 1).

A recent article written by Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) analyzed data from the first detailed long-term follow-up of a sample of serious adolescent female delinquents and similarly situated males. Neither marital attachment nor job stability, factors associated with male desistance from delinquency, was related strongly to male or female desistance. The literature suggests that females are more strongly connected to their family than are male juveniles. The study suggests as a result of the findings it is apparent that males commit more violent delinquent acts than females. Moreover, females "are more likely to commit delinquent acts with a mixed-gender group, while males are typically accompanied by same-gender companions (Giordano et al., p. 994). The study revealed that families' not supervising their children was significantly related to male reports of actions involving aggressive or violent behavior while those outside the families controlled for levels of female involvement (Giordano et al.). Finally, this

paper suggests that juvenile females' involvement in crime is likely to be less than that of males.

The next survey was by Rhodes and Fischer (1993). It looked at the relationship between gender and delinquency among inner-city adolescents involved in court diversion programs. The investigation found a gender difference in both the referral source and behavioral patterns of the juveniles involved. Interestingly, it appears, "males were more likely to be referred to the program for violations of the law, to have been arrested, and to have engaged in aggressive offenses and selling drugs" (Rhodes, & Fischer, p. 879). In contrast females were more likely to be referred due to status crimes. According to the authors, gang members had a large effect on the delinquent behaviors of all juveniles. Male gang members were more likely to be arrested, but female members were more likely to carry weapons (Rhodes & Fischer). Next, within the past two years males were significantly more likely than females to be arrested for delinquent acts. The research suggests that females are often dealt with more harshly than males who commit the same crimes. Also, Rhodes and Fischer suggest that males were more likely to get referred for violating the law while females got referred for truancy and runaway behaviors.

Numerous studies suggest an increase in psychological disturbance among youths in the justice system (Espelage et al. 2003). Researchers Espelage et al. found that not only do girl delinquents have more acute mental health problems, they also exhibit qualitatively distinct psychiatric profiles. Their research suggests the need for gender appropriate treatments but also the need for assessing the mental health symptoms of girl and boy delinquents. "Studies have found significant levels of conduct disorder,

substance abuse, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other mental health problems among juvenile offenders” (Espelage et al., p. 771). The research found that among males there were more drug abuse, depression, suicidal attempts, and alcohol abuse. Females had a significantly greater amount of anger, depression, and suicidal ideation than males.

An article by Cauffman et al. (2004) examined the relationship between social-emotional adjustment, gender, and delinquent acts among juveniles. Results show a strong relation between stress and restraint in predicting deviance, a finding that was invariant among gender. Their findings suggest that females internalize more than males, but they are as equally likely to externalize or outwardly express themselves as males. It appears from the study males tend to be less stressed out than females but do show signs of stress if involved in high rates of delinquency.

Traditional/Non-traditional

Our nation is experiencing a high increase in juvenile commitment rates. One reason for this increase is thought to be from non-traditional homes (living with single parents, living with grandparents, or living with non-family members). In fact, according to Woodson (2001, p. 269) “58 out of every 100 children are born into broken families”. In other areas such as inner-city neighborhoods it “is as high as eighty per hundred births” (Woodson, p. 269). This research suggests that children living in non-traditional homes are twice as likely to quit school, and over 50% more likely to quit school if their parents quit. Woodson states that as adults those juveniles from non-traditional homes are over 50% more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior and 1.4 times as likely to be jobless. Recent studies show that a 17% increase in delinquent activity with juveniles living in a

single-parent home. Interestingly, “more than factors of income, region, population density, and race; family structure has been shown to have the largest on juvenile robbery and homicide” (Woodson, p. 269). The study did show in high crime areas over 90% of the juveniles from traditional homes do not get into trouble. While the study did show that many fatherless youths turn to a pseudo family which was found in gangs. Furthermore, gangs offer support, care, and guidance to those juveniles who are involved (Woodson).

Delinquency within schools, alcohol abuse, and weapons carrying has become a large issue within the United States. A study done by Matherne and Thomas (2001) examined the family environment as a predictor of juvenile delinquency. They noted, “It is estimated that in the United States, 1,234 youths run away from home and 2,255 teenagers drop out of school each day (Matherne, & Thomas, p. 655). Recent researchers have attempted to decrease delinquency and also find what factors lead adolescents toward delinquency. Research suggests that delinquency can be placed into three etiologies’ positing societal, individual, and family (Matherne & Thomas). Basically, their research looked at the traditional family and non-traditional family to see what factors may cause juvenile delinquency. Results showed the frequency of delinquent acts for those children living in a non-traditional family but failed to predict criminal acts by juveniles within traditional homes. Sadly, “every five minutes a youth is arrested for some type of violent crime, and every two hours a child is killed by a gun” (Matherne & Thomas, p. 655). The study confirms that family involvement is a key element in the deterrence of juvenile delinquency. Their research supports the ideology that adolescents without family supervision are more likely to be engaged in criminal acts. It is reported

that those children from a traditional household are less likely to be involved in school problems than those individuals from a non-traditional home.

Kierkus and Baer (2002) studied the relationship between family structure and delinquent behavior. According to the article it is still unclear to how family structure affects delinquent behavior. Furthermore, most of past studies have only looked at how family structure is related to misbehavior (Kierkus & Baer). The purpose of this study was to discover if the parental attachment component of social control could show how family structure is connected to delinquency. The research showed a significant predictor “of most self-reported delinquent behaviors at the zero order level and when age, sex, and SES are controlled” (Kierkus & Baer, p. 425). Basically, once parental attachment is placed into the equation, delinquency is reduced especially in traditional families. They said that the social control theory may provide an answer to how family structures are linked to delinquency. Also, it appears from the study that children from non-traditional families experience lower levels of parental attachment which leads to delinquent activity (Kierkus & Baer).

Bruce (2002) looked at family intervention and how it affects juvenile delinquency. The study showed that youths aged 10-17 years with conduct disorder or delinquency who had family parenting intervention classes were deterred from getting arrested, spending time in institutions, and often reported delinquency compared to other children (Bruce, p. 123). The article suggests that recurrent delinquent acts are connected to higher rates of substantial social cost within this country. Bruce wrote that interventions that reduce time spent in detention centers could contribute to the family and society at large. Bruce also concludes that children from traditional homes are much

more likely to not commit delinquent acts than those from non-traditional homes. The article supports other research that indicates that children from non-traditional families are far more likely to suffer from psychological disorders than those from the traditional family.

Avakame (1997) examined power control theory by accounting for the ideological component of patriarchy and effects on delinquents using socialization agents such as peers, the church, and television. Power Control theory suggests that major social components such as church, parents, sports teams, or other may heavily influence a juvenile's decision to commit or not commit crime. The researcher examined how the variables affect the patriarchal sex-role attitudes, taste for risk, and delinquent activities among juveniles. Interestingly, there was a major difference between matriarchal, egalitarian, and patriarchal family types in relation to parental relationship and control of their children. However, the differences were not in the directions suggested by power-control theory. The data "did not support the argument that the analytic focus must extend beyond the nuclear family and its socialization methods to properly account for the development of patriarchal sex-role attitudes" (Avakame, p. 477). This research focused on the ideology that power-control theory is a key to understanding crime and delinquency within America. The study extended the power control theory by explicitly analyzing the dimension of patriarchy.

Keller, Catalano, Haggerty, and Fleming (2002) examined children whose parents used drugs and other illegal substances. Keller et al. said it has long been known that children of substance abusing parents have an elevated risk of becoming involved in delinquent activities. This study sought to determine if multiple parent-figure transitions

affect the probability that adolescents may use drugs. In addition, the study sought to determine the probability that adolescents may commit delinquent acts with parents who receive methadone treatment. Keller and his colleagues controlled for delinquency, child characteristics, family conflicts, depression, and past criminal history and determined that a larger amount of parenting disruptions did account for the higher probability of delinquent behavior. Their study found that “only females had a higher likelihood of drug used as the number of family disruptions increased” (Keller et al., p. 399). However, age was strongly related to males who use drugs during an early age. Those juveniles who had no family support or were not from a traditional family had an extreme risk of becoming involved in delinquent activities. Finally, the study found that, over time, stress caused juveniles to be influenced toward drug use and other delinquent activities.

A study by Woolfenden, Williams, and Peat (2002) studied family interventions for delinquency and conduct disorder. It was their intent to determine if parenting interventions reduced school truancy, conduct disorder, and/or delinquency. Their research found that family and parenting “interventions significantly reduced the time spent by juvenile delinquents in institutions (Woolfenden et al., p. 251). The researchers also found that there was a significant decrease in juvenile delinquency recidivism. Other evidence from the study found that family interventions toward juveniles had some benefit on reducing hours spent in institutions. Also, family intervention appeared to play a key role in reducing delinquency especially within the traditional family. The study shows that society could save money with family intervention programs. The study found that within the age of 10-17yrs there was around 1.5% to 3.4% who suffered from conduct disorder. Researchers concluded by saying “a history of conduct problems in

childhood is a predictor of future juvenile delinquency” (Woolfenden et al., p. 251). Past studies have shown that over 2% of juveniles come into contact with the justice system each year.

School Attendance

Headley (2003) looked at school vandalism and how the individual within social context affects juvenile involvement. In general vandalism studies have normally focused on the individual or the social context, but Headly’s research examined schools. Her research looked at how variables such as anger, frustration, and boredom have influenced juveniles to take part in school vandalism. Headley indicated that a coherent pattern of explanatory factors for the different motives could not be found, so she created a variable comprising of five motives and called it general motivation. Her study discovered that a poor attitude towards school did influence juveniles to commit vandalism. She also found that school anxiety, poor attitude towards teacher, and past delinquent history all played a strong role in juveniles’ committing delinquent acts. Again, those children from traditional families were less likely to be involved in vandalism than those who come from non-traditional homes. The fathers of those juveniles studied were also examined to determine if they affected the delinquency rate of juveniles. The “fathers level of education; punishment, hope, and class level were not significant factors in vandalism” (Headley, p. 62). However, those children who lived with a step father appeared to be more prone to delinquency than those living with their biological father. The article suggests that social context, instead of personal factors, social class, or age, plays a more crucial role in school vandalism. Lastly, Headly’s research revealed that those living in a lower class rather than middle or upper class environment were more susceptible to

delinquent activities. The studies showed a small percentage of children from non-traditional homes were even more likely to be involved in drugs or other delinquent activities than those from traditional homes. The research suggested that the age of the juvenile was the single biggest factor to being involved in drug and alcohol abuse (Headley).

Schmidt (2003) examines the association between a juvenile's engagement in daily problems and involvement in school misconduct. Juvenile's misconduct is on the increase and has become a major concern for our society. Schmidt looked into how daily challenges can impact misconduct among children. Aggression and impulsiveness appears to contribute to juvenile delinquency. Schmidt determined that, "Most individuals are able to cope with the substantial demands that arise during adolescence; the changes that characterize this phase of the life cycle may make adolescents especially vulnerable to the negative effects of a variety of adversities" (p. 440). His research determined that family breakups, poverty, and mental illnesses can strongly influence children to get involved in delinquent activities. Schmidt found that there was reduced misconduct between juveniles who are facing adversity and delinquent behavior. He stated, "Engagement is assessed by the amount of time spent in challenging activities and in terms of subjective ratings of success in daily challenges" (Schmidt, p. 439). This study found that juveniles who have adversity at home or school are at particular high risk for misconduct and eventually being arrested and adjudicated. Results show that time spent in daily activities and time spent in daily activities that lead to successes are independently related to misconduct. Interestingly, involvements in extracurricular activities were shown to help reduce misconduct for high-but not low-adversity children.

As Schmitt noted “Among high adversity adolescents, opportunity for engagement and perceived success in daily challenge were not only associated with reduced misconduct in cross-sectional analyses but also were predictive of reductions in misconduct over time” (p. 439).

Sprott (2004) examined at the development of early delinquency and how the classroom could make a difference in the life of a juvenile. Social control theory states that school experiences provide social bonds that prevent children from committing delinquent acts. Her research suggests that there are two types of support for juveniles within the classroom: emotional and instrumental. It appears that emotional support within the classroom is better for high risk delinquents than instrumental support. Results of her study revealed “that an emotionally supportive classroom when these children were 10 to 13 years old was related to lower levels of violence two years later, when they were 12 to 15 years old” (Sprott, p. 553). The classes that had instrumental support, such as math classes, generally had lower property offender and social interaction within the classroom was stronger for lower levels of violence. Children who are in an academic setting have a sense of connectedness and are less influenced by peer pressure.

Recently, juvenile crime has risen dramatically within this country and, as a result, has stirred more research activity on juvenile delinquency. Traditionally, researchers have looked at juvenile courts and explored the conviction rates on truancy and other acts as well as juvenile index offenses that have increased across the United States. In addition school truancy has been attributed to broken families, drug abuse, and influences by peers. Moreover, the study looked at reducing high numbers of school absentees and other delinquent activities. Chronic absenteeism is known to be common

practice for many juveniles within this country. The study showed the assessment of how to reduce truancy and other delinquent activities. Of those juveniles who took part in the program only 20% needed further punishment (McClusky et al. (2004)). Also around, “6 percent of the total population was referred to a social service agency” (McCluskey et al., p. 224). McCluskey et al. found that the program was successful in reducing the number of absentees within the highest offenders. Furthermore, the McClusky et al. article details ways in which school systems can fund this program that targets high risk juveniles. The authors suggest that school attendance problems need to be looked at especially in the inner city.

Gaviria and Raphael (2001) examined how peers at school affect juvenile delinquency. Specifically they studied the role of peer pressure had on alcohol use, cigarette use, church attendance, and school drop out rates among juveniles. The authors found that school friends often affect juvenile activities at all levels. Moreover, they found evidence of “...endogeneity bias for two of the five activities analyzed (drug use and alcohol drinking)” (Gaviria & Raphael, p. 257). It is believed that social interactions play a major role in juvenile behavior and their economic abilities to survive. Gaviria and Raphael’s research shows that students interact more at school than outside school and are more likely to reflect their peers actions. Strong evidence from this study suggests that most juveniles develop strong friendships at school. The research suggest that “65% of the tenth-graders attended school with their best friend and 94% attended school with at least one of their three closest friends” (Gaviria & Raphael, p. 260). Around 83% of the children who participated in the survey stated that meeting friends was the main reason to go to school. The study findings reveal that school policies do not affect the use

of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs by juveniles. It appears that Catholic schools have an effect that increases drug use among children. However, Catholic schools have an opposite effect on alcohol abuse. Parents' involvement was also a huge factor in deterring delinquent activities. The study revealed that drug use by the biological parents increased their children's use of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol by 19.4%. Those children living within a single-parent household increased the likelihood of drugs use by half. The study showed that many of those who dropped out of school were followers of their parents dropping out. The study also found that children who played sports appeared less likely to be involved in delinquency and had lower rates of alcohol abuse.

Race/Ethnicity

MacDonald (2001) looked at the analytical methods researchers have used to examine racial differences within the juvenile court system. Past research on juvenile court decisions and racial disparity has often been criticized for lack of methodological rigor. This study addressed racial issues through an analysis of juvenile cases from the state of Hawaii. MacDonald found few differences between races and a general tendency of leniency toward white delinquents. The study did find a difference in the accuracy with which the regression models used to predict court outcomes. Racial differences are an important issue within the United States of America. Recent studies have tried to address the issue of racial selecting, but they have not addressed an appropriate model for the system. MacDonald's research, showed that the strongest effect on juvenile outcomes were actually legal factors such as DNA and other physical evidence. According to MacDonald, White juveniles received less time in detention than did non-whites. African Americans were less likely than Whites to receive guidance while in the juvenile justice

system. More African American juveniles who were first-time offenders received the maximum punishment than did White juveniles. It appears that “ethnicity was a relevant factor in the juvenile court process at the intake stage and that once a juvenile is processed further into the system; the impact of ethnicity becomes attenuated (MacDonald, p. 507).

The research showed that children without attorneys were more likely to have charges dismissed. Moreover, non-white delinquents represented by a private attorney were more likely than whites to receive a secure confinement disposition. Within the juvenile court system the study found that Whites were more likely to move faster and further than non-whites. Guevara et al. (2004) looked at the influence of legal counsel across race on court outcomes among juveniles. The study examined the interaction of race and what type of lawyers the juveniles were provided by the state. It was suggested that juveniles without lawyers may have more benefit in court than those with private lawyers. Guevara et al. (2004) observed “African Americans represent 15% of all juveniles younger than 18 in the United States but represent 32% of adjudicated delinquency cases and 40% of juveniles in residential placement (p. 345). Within the United States of America African Americans are confined to detention 7 to 9 times that of Whites. Guevara et al. (2004) found that most African Americans were discriminated against in all parts of the juvenile justice system. They indicated that African American juveniles receive longer sentences and are tried as adults more than White juveniles. Also the study suggests that African American juveniles are more likely to be taken into custody by police than their White counterparts. African American children are more likely to be detained until the hearing than White juveniles.

Kim (2000) made a gender comparison with drug use and arrest rates among juveniles. The study looked at male and females differences in the validity of drug use among arrested juveniles by using a gender-matched sample. Self-reported drug use was compared to urinalysis results to find gender differences in the accuracy of disclosure (Kim). Females were more willing than males to admit to past use of marijuana. Gender was not a major factor with the amount of cocaine used in the past. However, race was a key factor in this study on drugs and arrests among juveniles. Hispanic females were more likely than Hispanic males to not report or admit to past use of cocaine. African American females were more likely to report cocaine use especially those living in a traditional home. White males reported the use of marijuana or cocaine more than African American males. Overall, African American juveniles were significantly more likely to report drug or alcohol abuse than White juveniles. The research suggested that family influences made the difference in the races and causing African males to report more than White males.

A study done by McClelland, Elkington, Teplin, and Abram (2004) examined the prevalence of multiple substance use disorders among juveniles who were incarcerated within the United States. The research found that 48% of the detainees had multiple substance use disorders, while nearly 21% had two multiple substance use disorders. Around 19% of the males combined alcohol and marijuana, while 17% of the female detainees did the same. Around 50% of White male juveniles had an alcohol disorder, and around 50% of African American males also had an alcohol disorder. The researchers found that nearly one in four juveniles in the United States has a drug or alcohol disorder. Significantly “more non-Hispanic white and Hispanic than African American detainees had

combinations of a substance use disorder involving illicit drugs other than marijuana” (McClelland et al., p. 1218). The study agreed with past studies in that race plays a key role in the different levels of substance use disorder. The research reported that older juveniles reported higher levels of disorders than younger adolescents. It was suggested that more research be done in order to find a cause of substance disorders.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to analyze variables that affect the delinquency commit rate of juveniles. Moreover, this study used external variables to determine how they affected the commit rate of juveniles. Four external factors, (race, gender, school attendance, and parental influence) were examined within this study. The following hypotheses were formulated: Hypothesis 1 stated that males are more likely to have a higher commitment rate than females. Hypothesis 2 stated that African American juveniles will have a higher commitment rate than Whites, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans. Hypothesis 3 stated that juveniles who come from a traditional two-parent (mother and father) household will be less likely to have a high commit rate than juveniles who do not come from a traditional two-parent household. Finally, hypothesis 4 stated that Juveniles with a low absentee rate from school will be less likely to have a higher commitment rate than those juveniles with a high absentee rate.

Data

Data used for this study are currently archived on the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD), which can be accessed through on the University of Michigan's website. Data within this current study were collected in 1995 by Esbensen and Osgood (1999) as part of a study to explore the success of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program. Data for this study were collected by the use of a cross-sectional survey which was given to eighth grade students in schools in which the G.R.E.A.T. program had been taught to seventh grade students the previous year. Records that came from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

(ATFE) provided information on where the sites for the surveys would be administered. The ATFE identified the schools where officers had instructed the G.R.E.A.T. program the prior year. Moreover, the sample for the data consisted of 5,935 eighth grade students who came from 42 different schools across 11 different United States cities and or counties. The locations which were involved in this study were Omaha, NE; Phoenix, AZ; Philadelphia, PA; Kansas City, MO; Milwaukee, WI; Orlando, FL; Las Cruces, NM; Will County, IL; Torrance, CA; Providence, RI; and Pocatello, ID. The final number of students who took this survey was restricted by such factors as varying attendance rates among those schools involved and the refusal of parents to fill out consent forms. The respondents were selected to be a national representative sample of all eighth graders in the United States (Esbensen & Osgood).

Variables

This section provides a description of the independent and dependent variables used to examine the hypotheses in this study. One single dependent variable was used in the present study and was identified as the commit rate of delinquency by juveniles. Four different independent variables were used in the study. Each variable was used to examine the effects that respondents' race, gender, school attendance, and living situation had on the commit rate of juveniles living in the United States.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of commitment rate consisted of 10 different types of crimes that juveniles could be guilty or not guilty of. For the researchers to examine the commitment rate of juveniles, the study contained a question asking the eighth graders if they had ever been guilty or not of using illegal drugs. The responses for the variables on

the Likert scale were 1 = not very guilty/badly, 2 = somewhat guilty/badly, 3 = very guilty/badly, to 9 = no answer. The other nine questions were as follows: Are you guilty of motor vehicle theft? Have you ever sold illegal drugs other than marijuana? Another one asked if the juvenile had ever used marijuana? Are you guilty of assaulting someone without a weapon? Then, have you ever been guilty of assaulting someone by hitting them? Have you ever been guilty of using alcohol before? Next, have you ever been guilty of selling marijuana? Ever been guilty of armed robbery before? Finally, have you ever been guilty of using tobacco?

Independent Variables

Four independent variables were examined in this study. The first variable was the respondents' gender (1 = Male; 2 = Female; 9 = No answer). Next, was a variable used to control for the respondents' race. The original race variable in the G.R.E.A.T. data consisted of seven different racial categories. The categories were: (1 = Whites; 2 = Blacks; 3 = Hispanics; 4 = American Indian; 5 = Asian; 6 = Other; 7 = Mixed; and 9 = no answer). For the purpose of this study the original race variable was recoded into three separate variables. It was then recoded into new variables as: 1 = White; 2 = Black; 3 = Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, other, Mixed, and no answer.

The next variable examined how respondents lived which was arranged into seven categories. Those categories are as follows: (1 = Mother only; 2 = Father only; 3 = Both Mom and Dad; 4 = Other; 5 = Grandparents; 6 = Mother & other relatives; and 7 = Father & other relatives). For the purpose of this study the variable was recoded into four categories. The new variables are as follows: 1 = Mother only; 2 = Father only; 3 = Both Mom and Dad; 4 = Other; Grandparents; Mother & relatives; Father & relatives. The last

variable looked at the school attendance rate among those that responded to the survey. There were originally 11 different categories for school attendance. The categories were: (2 = A couple days; 3 = A few days; 6 = Every 2 months; 52 = Weekly; 365 = Everyday; 990 = More than 989; 995 = Don't know; 996 = Positive, un code-able; 997 = Lots, etc; 998 = Refuse; 999 = No answer). However, for the purpose of this study all of the original data were recoded into four different categories. The new data was recoded as follows: (1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Frequently; and 9 = Missing). It was also recoded into four dummy variables as follows: (1 = A couple; and A few) (2 = Every two months) (3 = Weekly; Everyday; More than 989; Don't know; Positive, not code able; and Lots, etc) (9 = Refuse; and No answer).

Analytic Strategy

To test the hypotheses in this study, statistical tests of significance were conducted. Frequencies and descriptive statistics for each variable were determined at the univariate level. At the bivariate level chi-square was computed using contingency tables in crosstabulations for each of the variables. This was used to compare the commit rate of juveniles between males and females, and it was used to compare White, Black, and others. Also, chi-square was used to compare the commit rate of juveniles to the amount of school skipped which was measured as rarely, sometimes, or frequently. Finally, chi-square was used to compare the commit rate to living conditions which are with mother, father, both, or other. Phi and Cramer' V was used to compare the strength of the relationships between a juveniles' commit rates and the four independent variables.

At the multivariate level a general (nonhierarchical) log-linear model of analysis was conducted to analyze the differences in commit rate of juveniles by the independent

variables. This allowed for an examination of the effect that each independent variable had on the commit rate of juveniles. Dummy variables were created in order to examine the effects of gender, race, living conditions, and school attendance.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to look at the commitment rate of juveniles and the effects that gender, race, school attendance, and parents have on juveniles being guilty or not guilty. It was predicted that the juveniles would be most influenced by living with their traditional family (father or mother) than with a non-traditional family. Moreover, the hypothesis stated juveniles who come from a traditional two-parent household will be less likely to have a higher commit rate than juveniles who do not come from a two-parent household. Furthermore, it was predicted that school attendance would have a direct effect on the commitment rate of juveniles. Those juveniles who attend school more often than others will have a lower commit rate. Next, it was predicted that African Americans would have a higher commit rate of delinquency than Whites, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans. Finally, it was predicted that male juveniles would be more likely to have a higher commit rate than female juveniles.

This section includes details of the results for all of the statistical tests that were conducted in this study. Results shown in this section are also illustrated in tables that are included within the text. There are seven tables discussed in this section. The first table consists of analysis of the data at the univariate, and the final six tables present analysis of the data at the bivariate and multivariate levels.

Summary Statistics

Table 1 contains the summary statistics for all of the variables used in this current research. The table shows the number of males and females who participated in the study, the participates' gender, race, and their responses toward school attendance by rarely,

sometimes, or frequently missing school, the statistics on the dependent variable, and whether they live with their mother, father, both, or other. There were 5,884 who indicated their gender. Moreover, of those, 51.9% were females and the remaining 48.1% were males. There were 5,935 of the respondents who indicated their race. Of those, 39.6% were White, 26.0% were African American, and 34.3% indicated that they were Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, or from another race. There were 1,072 responses to the question concerning school attendance. Around 72.3% of the respondents stated that they rarely miss school. While 10.1% sometimes miss school and 9.6% frequently miss school. Finally, out of 5,794 respondents, 27.9% live with their mother, 3.6% live with their father, 62.6% live with both, and 5.7% live with other people.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

Variable	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	3054	59.1%
Male	2830	48.1%
Race		
White	2355	39.6%
Black	1544	26.0%
Other	2036	34.3%
School Attendance		
Rarely	776	72.3%
Sometimes	109	10.1%
Frequently	84	9.6%
Live with		
Mother	1620	27.9%
Father	213	3.6%
Both	3628	62.6%
Other	333	5.7%

Crosstabulations

The next four tables are crosstabulation of the dependent variable with each of the independent variables. The dependent variable of commitment rate of juveniles was in the row while the independent variables were in the columns. The dependent variable was recoded as 0 = not guilty and 1 = guilty. Not all of the comparisons in the tests were significant at the .05 and at the .01 level. In addition to the crosstabulations a chi-square test, Phi test, and Cramer's V test were run on the dependent and independent variables. In Table 2 gender was placed in the column while the dependent variable commit rate was placed in the row. The test revealed that males are not guilty 56.0% of the time while females are not guilty 44.0% of the time. This is a difference of 12.0% between male juveniles and female juveniles commit rate. Moreover, 44.0% of male juveniles are guilty of committing a crime. In relation, females are guilty of committing a delinquent act 56.0% of the time. Combined, averages of 50% of the juveniles surveyed are not guilty of committing a crime. For this test the Pearson's Chi-Square value (81.902) revealed that males and females were significant at the .01 alpha level.

Table 2
Crosstabulation of Gender by Commit Rate

Commitment rate of juveniles

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
	%	%
Not Guilty	56.0% **	44.0% **
Guilty	44.0% **	56.0% **
Total	100%	100%

Significant at the .01 level **

Table 3 was a crosstabulation involving the dependent variable of commitment rate and the independent variable of race. For this table the dependent variable remained coded at 0 = not guilty and 1 = guilty. The independent variable was placed in the columns while the dependent variable was placed in the row. The test revealed that White's are not guilty 47.1% of the time while African Americans are not guilty 55.4%, and all other races are not guilty 50.5% of the time. Of those juveniles, 50.4% who answered the question are not guilty of committing a crime. Moreover, 52.9% of White juveniles who answered are guilty of committing a crime. African Americans are guilty 44.6% of the time, and other races are guilty 49.6% of the time period. Of those juveniles, 49.5% who answered are guilty of committing a crime. For this test the Pearson's Chi-Square value (25.618) revealed that all races were significant at the .01 alpha level.

Table 3
Crosstabulation of Race by Commit Rate

Commitment rate of juveniles

Race	White %	Black %	Other %	Total
Not guilty	47.1%**	55.4%**	50.5%**	50.4%
Guilty	52.9%**	44.6%**	49.5%**	49.6%

Significant at the .01 level **

Table 4 was a crosstabulation involving the dependent variable of commitment rate and the next independent variable which is live with. The dependent variable was coded as 0 = not guilty and 1 = guilty. The test revealed that those juveniles who live with their mother are not guilty 56.7% of the time while those juveniles living with their father are not guilty 61.0% of the time. Of those surveyed 46.0% reported not being guilty if they lived with both parents. Finally, 58.0% of those juveniles who lived with other people stated that they were not guilty of committing a crime. Only 39.0% of the juveniles living with their father had reported being guilty of a crime while 43.3% of those living with their mother reported being guilty. In reference to those living with both parents around 54.0% said that they were guilty. Finally, the test showed that 42.0% of those juveniles living with other people revealed being guilty of a crime. Table 4 showed that 50.2% of the juveniles who answered this are not guilty of a crime. 49.8% of those who answered the survey said that they were guilty of a crime. The Pearson's Chi-Square value (71.010) and the crosstabulation of Live With by Commit Rate was significant at the .01 level.

Table 4

Crosstabulation of Live With by Commit Rate

	Commitment rate of juvenile				Total
	Live with mother %	Live with Father %	Live with both %	Live with other %	
Not guilty	56.7%**	61.0%**	46.0%**	58.0%**	50.2%
Guilty	43.3%**	39.0%**	54.0%**	42.0%**	49.8%

Significant at the .01 level**

The 5th table is a crosstabulation of the dependent variable commit rate and the final independent variable school attendance. The dependent variable was coded at 0 = not guilty and 1 = guilty of committing a crime. This test revealed that 62.5% of juveniles surveyed said that they rarely miss school and are not guilty of a crime. Those marked sometimes miss school are 85.3% of the time not guilty of committing a crime. While those who frequently miss school are 78.6% of time not guilty. Finally, all other juveniles are 71.4% of the period not guilty. However, in relation to being guilty of committing a crime and who rarely miss school 37.5% are guilty. Of those who marked sometimes miss school around 14.7% admitted to being guilty of a crime. Furthermore, of those juveniles who marked frequently miss school only around 21.4% stated that they were guilty of committing a crime. Lastly, all others were guilty only 28.65% of the time. The test showed that of all those who answered 67.1% were not guilty and 32.9% were guilty of committing a crime. The Pearson's Chi-Square value (30.744) and the crosstabulation of School Attendance by Commit Rate was significant at the .01 level.

Table 5
Crosstabulation of School Attendance by Commit Rate

<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Commitment Rate of Juveniles</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>Rarely</u> %	<u>Sometimes</u> %	<u>Frequently</u> %	<u>Other</u> %	
Not guilty	62.5%**	85.3% **	78.6%**	71.4%**	67.1%
Guilty	37.5% **	14.7%**	21.4%**	28.6%**	32.9%

Significant at the .01 level**

PHI and Cramer's V

Table 6 indicates the Phi and Cramer's V value between the dependent variable of commit rate of juveniles and all of the independent variables. The strongest relationship was school attendance but it had only a weak Phi of .169 and a weak Cramer's V at .169. The relationship between school attendance and the dependent variable was significant at the .01 level. This indicates that school attendance seems to be the most significant factor contributing to commitment rate of juveniles. Furthermore, this finding does not support the hypothesis that juveniles with a low absentee from school will be less likely to be convicted than those juveniles with a high absentee.

The other independent variables sex, race, and living conditions were all significant at the .01 levels. Moreover, the remaining variables sex, race, and living conditions all had weak positive relationships with the commit rate of juveniles. Interestingly, race had the weakest Phi and Cramer's V which was .066. The next weakest relationship was between the independent variable of live with and the commit

rate of juveniles. The Phi and Cramer's V was .111 while it had a significance of .000. The last variable of gender was significant and it has a Phi of .118 and Cramer's V of .118.

Table 6
Phi and Cramer's V

Commitment Rate of Juveniles		
Variables	Phi	Cramer's V
Sex	.118**	.118**
School Attendance	.169**	.169**
Race	.066**	.066**
Live with	.111**	.111**

** Relationship is significant at the .01 level.

Logistic Regression

Table 7 reports the summary of the logistic regression analysis for the variables predicting the commit rate of juveniles. The largest regression coefficient (Beta) was used for each of the independent variables. The Cox and Snell R squared reported that the four independent variables chosen for this study only account for 3.5% of the reason juveniles commit crime or delinquent actions. Interestingly, gender had the highest significance and it was significant at the .01 level. According to the study females are more guilty than males in reference to committing crimes. The Beta score for this relationship was .748. Next, was school attendance which it had a significance level of .014. This meant that the relationship was significant at the .05 but not at the .01 level. Furthermore, the Beta value for this case was -.087. This was not consistent with the hypothesis that the less time a juveniles attend school the more likely they will be guilty

of committing a crime. Next, is the relationship between race and the dependent variable of commitment rate of juveniles. In this case the relationship was not significant at the .01 alpha level. Because this relationship was not significant, there was not a need to look at the Beta which has a value of -.040. The final independent variable was live with and its relationship with the dependent variable of juvenile commit rate. This relationship also was not significant at the .01 alpha level. However, the Beta was .037 even though the relationship was not significant.

Table 7
Summary of General Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Juvenile Commit Rate

Variables	B	Sig.
Gender	.748**	.000
School attendance	-.087*	.014
Race	-.040	.549
Live with	.037	.792
Significant at the .05*		
Significant at the .01**		
Cox and Snell R Squared	.035	3.5%

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to study the factors that affect the commitment rate of juveniles and how outside variables such as sex, race, school attendance, and parent influences contribute to the commitment of crime by juveniles. In this study it was predicted in hypothesis 1 that males are more likely to have a higher commitment rate than females. Hypothesis 2 stated that African Americans American juveniles will have a higher commitment rate than Whites, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans. Hypothesis 3 stated that juveniles that come from a traditional two-parent household will be less likely to have a high commit rate than juveniles who not come from a traditional two-parent household. Finally, hypothesis 4 stated that Juveniles with a low absentee rate from school will be less likely to have a higher commitment rate than those juveniles with a high absentee rate.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicted that male juveniles would be more likely to have a higher commit rate than female juveniles. Several tests were conducted on the relationship between the commit rate of juveniles and gender. Interestingly, this hypothesis was not validated by the research conducted under this study. Evidence that opposes this hypothesis can be found in the results of the Crosstabulation between juveniles commit rate and how gender affects it (see table 2). In the Crosstabulation test a Phi test and a Cramer's V test were conducted on the relationship (see table 6). The Phi was (.118) and the Cramer's V was (.118). Both of these tests revealed a weak relationship between the two variables. Moreover, evidence opposing the hypothesis can

also be found in the results of Logistic Regression with a positive Beta of (.748). The most significant independent variable in the Beta test was gender which had a significance of (.000). This relationship between the first independent variable (gender) and the commit rate appeared to have a moderate positive correlation (see table 7).

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis predicted that African American juveniles will have a higher commit rate than Whites, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans. Evidence was found that opposed this hypothesis's statement. However, only the Crosstabulations test was significant enough to use for this study (see table 3). In the Crosstabulations test the Phi was (.066) and the Cramer's V was (.066) while it was significant at the .01 and .05 alpha levels (see table 6). These results revealed a very weak relationship between the second independent variable (race) and the commit rate.

When the Logistic Regression test was conducted, the Beta was (-.040) but it was not significant at the .01 alpha level (see table 7). In fact the results revealed that the significance level for this relationship was (.549). If it had been significant, then the relationship would have been a weak negative relationship. Moreover, this would mean that Whites would have a higher commit rate than African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis predicted that juveniles that come from a traditional two-parent household will be less likely to have a higher commit rate than juveniles who do not come from a two-parent household. Evidence was found that opposed hypothesis 3 in the Crosstabulations test. The relationship between these two variables was significant at

the .01 alpha level (see table 4). A Phi and Cramer's V tests were run during the Crosstabulations and they revealed a weak relationship between the two variables (see table 6). The Phi was (.111) while the Cramer's V was also (.111) plus the alpha level for this test was (.000).

Next, a Logistic Regression analysis was conducted on the third independent variable (Live With) and the commit rate (see table 7). This relationship was not significant due to the alpha being .792. However, if it had been significant then the Beta was (.037) meaning that the relationship was very weak.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth and final hypothesis predicted that juveniles with a low absentee rate from school will be less likely to have a higher commit rate than those juveniles with a high absentee rate. The hypothesis was not supported by the results of the Crosstabulations and Logistic regression results. In the Crosstabulations test the results revealed that it was significant at the .01 alpha level (see table 5). Furthermore, in this test a Phi and Cramer's V was conducted which revealed a weak relationship between the two variables (see table 6). The Phi was (.169) and the Cramer's V was also (.169). This test suggests that the more a juvenile attends school the more likely that that subject would have a higher commit rate.

In the Logistic regression analysis the relationship was significant at the .05 but not at the .01 alpha level (see table 7). In fact the significance level for the relationship was .014. The Beta in this relationship was (-.087) which indicated a weak negative relationship between these two variables. Moreover, this meant that the more days a juvenile missed school the more likely he or she would have a lower commit rate.

Limitations

The study had a few limitations and one of these limitations was because of secondary data. These have already been collected by Esbensen and Osgood (1999). Secondary data are easily accessible and it is convenient to use due to it saving the researcher time and money. Unfortunately, secondary data have a number of inherent drawbacks. Researchers who decide to use secondary data are limited to the sample, variables, and data collection methods that were chosen by the original researcher. An example of how the inability to add variables affects a study is by the lack of variables in the data set to measure the commit rate of juveniles. There are variables that could affect the depth of the study by allowing an assessment of how juveniles commit crime.

The final limitation of the study was the sample size. The sample size was very large and it had some minor differences that produced statistical significance in the studies results. A deeper interpretation was need because of this instead of a weaker interpretation. The size sample was needed in this type of study in order to generalize the results toward the entire juvenile population in the United States.

Implications

Implications involving this study are significant. There is numerous research reviewed in this study that reveals that the commitment rate of juveniles in crime and delinquency is a problem in the United States. The commit rate of juveniles is troubling due to the affects it can produce on society. This study provides some especially important information for parents who have children in middle school. The results did not show that the more a juvenile is in school the less likely they are committing crime and involved in delinquency. Second, the study is important to parents because it shows the

parents that they influence their children. One important implication of this study deals with gender. Most of all the articles placed in this study suggested that males are more likely to commit crimes than female juveniles. However, the statistics in this study revealed that females are more likely to have a higher commit rate than that of male juveniles.

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